Cambridge English
BEC Vantage

BEC Vantage Reading Part 1 – Teacher's Notes

Description

Students do a series of exercises that focus on matching paraphrases and deciding if some sentences are accurate in relation to short texts like those in Part 1. Finally they answer questions with information about Part 1.

Time required:	*45 minutes*
Materials required:	▪ *Student's Worksheet (one per student)* ▪ *Answer Sheet (one per student) which needs to be enlarged to double the size, available online in the relevant part of the **Vantage Reading** section of the **Cambridge Business English Handbook.***
Aims:	▪ *to familiarise students with the format of Reading Part 1* ▪ *to help them to identify paraphrases*

Procedure

1. Tell students that you're going to discuss giving feedback to employees on their performance (i.e. how well they are doing their jobs). Ask the following questions: Do you think giving feedback is a good idea? What are the benefits and risks for the employee? What are the benefits and risks for the organisation? What difficulties might there be for the person giving feedback? How should the feedback be given, e.g. spoken in front of colleagues or alone, sent to the employee by email, entered on the company intranet? [See **Key to Procedure steps**.]
2. Write on the board: 'A: the reluctance of companies to relate pay to staff performance'. Check understanding by eliciting the meanings of 'reluctance' [unwillingness, not wanting to do something] and 'to relate pay to staff performance' [to give an employee a higher or lower salary or wages, depending on how well they are doing their job]. Elicit and underline the keywords (i.e. the most important ones for the meaning – see **Key to Procedure steps**) ['the reluctance of companies to relate pay to staff performance']. Point out that underlining keywords is helpful, because it will help students to notice all the important information.
3. Write on the board: 'B: Many companies have started linking staff performance to salaries.' Ask if A and B have a similar meaning [no, because there is no suggestion of reluctance]. Write 'C: Few organisations have stretched the role of feedback so far as to link it to salaries.' Ask if A and C have the same meaning [yes, because C suggests reluctance to link feedback on performance to salaries]. Ask how A differs grammatically from B and C [see **Key to Procedure steps**].
4. Explain that you're going to help the students with Reading Part 1 and ask them what they know or can remember about Part 1. Give each student a copy of the **Student's Worksheet**. Ask them look at Exercise 1 and for each phrase, underline the keywords and decide which sentence (A or B) the phrase in bold matches. Check the answers, and ask why the other sentence *doesn't* match the phrase in bold [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**

5. Explain that in Exercise 2 the students need to find the part of the information that each phrase refers to. This will help them choose the right answers in Part 1. Ask them in pairs to underline the keywords in phrases 1-3 and the part of the information that each phrase refers to (NB: they may refer to more than one part of the text).
6. Check the answers [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
7. Explain that in Exercises 3 and 4 students will work through a complete Part 1, but in stages, to help them. Tell them that the complete text consists of four market analysts giving advice to the same company, Dexter. Ask students to look quickly at the heading and introductory information in the text in Exercise 3. Check their understanding by asking them what Dexter is [the name of a company], what its products include [shaving cream], and who Joe Hutchinson and Dan Valero are [business analysts].
8. Ask them why it's a good idea to read the text quickly before doing the task [to get a rough idea of what the text is about and what's in each section]. Ask them to read the text quickly.
9. Elicit the answers to 1-5, in each case asking which part of the text the statement refers to. (NB: this is to make sure students understand the main points of the text.) [See **Key to Student's Worksheet**.]
10. Explain that so far the students have moved from identifying what's referred to out of two sentences (in Exercise 1), to identifying it from a paragraph (in Exercise 2). Next they'll be looking at two paragraphs. Ask them to read the instructions in Exercise 4 and nos. 1-3, and match the statements to the relevant parts of the text in Exercise 3, which they should underline.
11. Check the answers [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
12. Explain that 4-7 refer to C and D, advice to Dexter from two more market analysts. Ask students to read the statements and texts, and in pairs to choose the right answers and underline the relevant parts of the texts.
13. Check the answers [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
14. Remind students that in Exercises 3 and 4 they have done a complete Part 1 task, in stages. Ask them to read Exercise 5, which summarises information and advice about Part 1, and elicit the answers. Point out that most of the answers are based on Exercises 3 and 4 [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
15. Ask students to look at Exercise 6. Elicit how to set about doing the task [first read the instructions carefully, then read the heading (Changes in performance feedback), read the four texts quickly to get an idea of what they're about, read the seven questions and underline the key words].
16. Give students a copy of the **answer sheet**. Ask them to do the complete task, marking – in pencil – one box (A, B, C or D) on the answer sheet for each answer. Point out that they should find the task fairly easy because they have already done some of it.
17. Check the answers [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
18. Ask students their opinions of 360-degree feedback (section A of the text), employees being able to read the feedback on their performance (section B), getting feedback more often than once a year (section C), and basing salaries on feedback (section D).

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**

Cambridge English
BEC Vantage

Suggested follow-up activities

1. Ask students to do the **Sample Task** as homework. If this is their first attempt at a Part 1 task, they should focus on getting the right answers, even if it takes longer than they'll have in the exam. Encourage them to make intelligent guesses rather than use a dictionary, and remind them that they don't need to understand every word, and can't use a dictionary in the text. Tell them they should aim to spend about 10 minutes on the task. Copy and enlarge the answer sheet in the relevant part of the **Vantage Reading** section of the **Cambridge Business English Handbook** and ask students to use it.
2. See the preparation ideas in the relevant part of the **Vantage Reading** section of the **Cambridge Business English Handbook (Preparation, general)** and **Part 1** of the test.

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**

Cambridge English
BEC Vantage

BEC Vantage Reading Part 1 – Answer Keys

Key to Procedure steps

Step 1:

Benefits for the employee include: finding out if their own perception of how well they're doing the job matches that of their line manager; receiving praise and appreciation; having the opportunity to identify ways of improving their skills so that they can do the job better; being involved in planning their own development; etc.

Risks for the employee include: being disappointed with the feedback; being given negative feedback that isn't constructive (i.e. that doesn't help the employee to work towards improvement); being misjudged; wasting time if the feedback isn't given in a helpful way; etc.

Benefits for the organisation include: making sure all employees know what's required of them and are helped to work towards that; involving employees in their own development and that of the organisation; etc.

Risks for the organisation include: employees and their line managers 'ticking boxes' (i.e. giving and receiving feedback simply because they have to) rather than using the feedback system constructively, leading to time being wasted and the organisation's systems being regarded as worthless; etc.

Potential difficulties for the person giving feedback include: not knowing how to give negative feedback constructively and without upsetting the employee or making them resentful; not having enough information and basing their feedback only on their own impression, or only on the employee's measurable output, without taking into account reasons why that output may be low; not understanding the need to give positive feedback; not allowing the employee to comment; etc.

Ways of giving feedback include: ideally a private face-to-face discussion, so that the employee can comment and there are no witnesses if they are upset by negative feedback; if an employee has done exceptionally well, they should receive recognition, e.g. by being mentioned in a staff newsletter or on the organisation's intranet; etc.

Step 2:

Keywords are generally lexical items (e.g. 'reluctance', 'pay') rather than grammatical words (e.g. 'the', 'of'). 'Companies' probably wouldn't be a keyword if the text is entirely about companies; it is if the text compares companies with other types of organisation.

Step 3:

the first is a noun phrase: it can't be true or false – it only refers to reluctance about something, but doesn't say anything about that reluctance. The other two are complete sentences that make assertions (statements) and so can be true or false. The noun phrase doesn't *mean* the same as the second sentence ('Few organisations…'), but it *refers* to it.

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**

Cambridge English
BEC Vantage

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 1

1. the way in which feedback could identify people suitable for promotion
   A (in B feedback is given to people who have *already* been identified as being suitable for promotion)
2. the feedback obtained on an employee being linked to requirements for a particular job
   B (in A, feedback on an employee is not mentioned)
3. aspects of a group of employees' work that were identified as requiring improvement
   A (B refers to skills, not any need for improvement)
4. feedback indicating both positive and negative aspects of an individual's work
   A (B doesn't refer to any positive aspects)

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 2

(Note: there are no precise answers with regard to which words are keywords. The words underlined below are suggestions.)

1. the aim of improving staff communication throughout an organisation

   Section of text: the desire of companies to create more open working environments where … ideas and opinions are exchanged between teams and across levels of seniority.

2. a way of giving feedback that is no longer used.

   Section of text: In the past, feedback about your performance used to mean a quiet chat with the boss

3. the participation of less senior personnel in a member of staff's feedback

   Section of text: the system where employees are also given feedback … by the people they manage

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 3

1. True (Many British companies fail in the US and Dexter is, unsurprisingly, finding it tough. … a loss-making American operation)
2. True (There are more important things to do with the money, for example dealing with the company's low profitability – a 2% return on sales. It might well be time to look at a few cost headings.)
3. False (raising the money to launch the products is the real challenge)
4. False (Dexter might … focus on product development and franchising)
5. True (They ought to consider whether they should continue to attack the American market, and, if so, they should seek a local partner)

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 4

1. B (Breaking out of the shaving cream market should not be impossible for Dexter, but raising the money to launch the products is the real challenge.)
2. B (Dexter might seek a partner with the promotional skills needed for mass marketing)

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**

3. A (There are more important things to do with the money, for example dealing with the company's low profitability – a 2% return on sales. It might well be time to look at a few cost headings.)
4. D (They need to take a hard look at how to generate demand; so far it's worked well through word of mouth but the average American buyer expects a huge advertising campaign.
5. D (its managers must be aware that the women's grooming market is crowded, and that to extend here they must remain loyal to the values of their existing range while still proving attractive to the new sector.)
6. C (Another approach may be to form alliances with like-minded cult fashion or sports outlets and attract a slice of the US market open to trying new products.)
7. C (Dexter's entrepreneurship, which has helped it get a share of a market previously dominated by two players)

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 5

1. Yes
2. 7
3. 4
4. No
5. Yes
6. No – they are always paraphrases
7. B – but it's sensible to read the questions first, then the first section of the text and find the questions it answers
8. No
9. Yes – even after finding what seems to be the right answer, it's sensible to check the other sections too
10. Yes – there's a 25% chance of guessing correctly

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**

Cambridge English
BEC Vantage

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 6

0. (As yet, few organisations have stretched the role of feedback so far as to link it to salaries.)
1. C (we tell them that waiting for the annual event of a formal appraisal needn't apply)
2. D (feedback could be used for 'succession planning', where companies use the information to speculate on who has the right skills to move into more senior positions)
3. A (the desire of companies to create more open working environments where … ideas and opinions are exchanged between teams and across levels of seniority)
4. B (Feedback on an individual, which is based on a questionnaire relating to attributes needed for that person's role in the company)
5. C (We needed to develop the interpersonal skills of these technically-minded people)
6. D (providing pointers to your strengths and also to those areas you need to develop more)
7. A (360-degree feedback – the system where employees are also given feedback … by the people they manage)

Key to Sample Task

1. C (Successful retailers must … invest in the training of employees so they are able to offer impartial advice to customers.)
2. A (There are a large number of mobile phone retailers and I can't help but feel the market only has room for four players.)
3. D (the mobile telephone has changed from simply being a business tool, to being a means of communication for everyone)
4. B (every time they lower their tariffs, more people come into the market)
5. C (We don't believe in criticising other retailers, but there's nothing particularly exciting out there at present.0
6. D (The mobile phone business is behaving like the internet industry in take-up and the pace of innovation)
7. A (some customers buy their first mobile phone in the supermarket, but for advice, add-ons and particular services they turn to the specialist)

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**

Cambridge English
BEC Vantage

BEC Vantage Reading Part 1 – Student's Worksheet

Feedback on staff performance

Exercise 1

Underline the keywords in the six phrases in **bold**, and decide whether the phrase refers to A or B. Tick (√) the right answer.

1 the way in which feedback could identify people suitable for promotion

A Feedback could be taken into account when considering who has the right skills to move into more senior positions.

B People who are suitable for promotion could be given feedback on what skills they still need to develop.

2 the feedback obtained on an employee being linked to requirements for a particular job

A When a vacant position is advertised, applicants are given a person specification, listing the personal attributes required for the post.

B Feedback on an individual is based on a questionnaire relating to attributes needed for that person's role in the company.

3 aspects of a group of employees' work that were identified as requiring improvement

A 250 technical managers went through a feedback process because the company needed to develop their interpersonal skills.

B The feedback process identified a number of people with skills that hadn't previously been recognised.

4 feedback indicating both positive and negative aspects of an individual's work

A Feedback can provide pointers to your strengths and also to those areas you need to develop more.

B Feedback can open the employee's eyes to weaknesses of which they have been unaware.

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**

Cambridge English
BEC Vantage

Exercise 2

Look at the phrases below (1 – 3) and the information about feedback on staff performance.

Underline the keywords in 1 – 3. Then underline the part or parts of the information that each phrase refers to.

1 the aim of improving staff communication throughout an organisation

2 a way of giving feedback that is no longer used

3 the participation of less senior personnel in a member of staff's feedback

In the past, feedback about your performance used to mean a quiet chat with the boss. But now 360-degree feedback – the system where employees are also given feedback by peers and by the people they manage – is taking root in corporate culture. The system is characterised by greater participation and has grown out of the desire of companies to create more open working environments where people work better together and ideas and opinions are exchanged between teams and across levels of seniority.

Exercise 3

Read the advice of two market analysts about the future of a company called Dexter, then decide if the statements below are true or false.

What next for Dexter?

Dexter's new shaving cream is a hit in the UK. The company's next challenges are to branch out into new products and to success in America. Two top analysts give their advice.

A Joe Hutchinson

For Dexter the hardest part is yet to come. Many British companies fail in the US and Dexter is, unsurprisingly, finding it tough. And what's the sense in seeking cash for expansion into new product areas while having to support a loss-making American operation? There are more important things to do with the money, for example dealing with the company's low profitability – a 2% return on sales. It might well be time to look at a few cost headings.

B Dan Valero

Breaking out of the shaving cream market should not be impossible for Dexter, but raising the money to launch the products is the real challenge. Dexter might seek a partner with the promotional skills needed for mass marketing, or focus on product development and franchising. They ought to consider whether they should continue to attack the American market, and, if so, they should seek a local partner. If control is a priority, the European market may be worth a look instead.

1 According to Joe Hutchinson, Dexter's American operation is in difficulty. ……

2 Hutchinson recommends Dexter to try and reduce costs and increase profit margins. ……

3 Dan Valero thinks Dexter should easily finance new products. ……

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**

4 Valero recommends Dexter to avoid running a franchising operation. ……

5 Valero thinks that Dexter would need to co-operate with an American company if it continues to operate in the US. ……

Exercise 4

Look at the statements below (1 – 3). Underline the part or parts of the advice in Exercise 3 that each statement refers to, and write by each statement whether it refers to A or B.

Example: It would be inadvisable for Dexter to extend its range of products at this time.

…*A*…

1 Although Dexter can probably extend its range, finding enough capital will be difficult.

……

2 Dexter should consider working with a company experienced in advertising on a large scale.

……

3 Increasing the margin on the current range is an area Dexter should concentrate on.

……

Here is some advice for Dexter from two more market analysts.

Look at the statements below (4 – 7). Underline the part or parts of the advice in C and D that each statement refers to, and write by each statement whether it refers to C or D.

4 The kind of promotion Dexter has relied on so far is unlikely to influence its target customers.

……

5 Dexter needs to think carefully about the brand image of its products. ……

6 Supplying niche retailers could give Dexter access to a new group of customers.

……

7 Dexter's approach to doing business has enabled it to compete with larger companies.

……

C James Sunderland

Dexter's entrepreneurship, which has helped it get a share of a market previously dominated by two players, will be the key to further growth. The American market is particularly challenging, but a possible strategy is to target distributors to American retailers or a British-based subsidiary of an American parent. Another approach may be to form alliances with like-minded cult fashion or sports outlets and attract a slice of the US market open to trying new products.

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**.

D Melanie Leconte

Dexter intends to increase its market share, and one way of doing this is to introduce new products, perhaps aimed at women, into its existing range. However, its managers must be aware that the women's grooming market is crowded, and that to extend here they must remain loyal to the values of their existing range while still proving attractive to the new sector. They need to take a hard look at how to generate demand; so far it's worked well through word of mouth but the average American buyer expects a huge advertising campaign.

Exercise 5

The texts in Exercises 3 and 4 and the questions in Exercise 4 make up a complete Part 1 task. In the exam, the questions are mixed up.

Answer these questions with information about Part 1 of the Reading paper.

Reading Part 1

Example:

	How long should you spend on Part 1?	*No longer than 10 minutes*
1	Is there an example?	……
2	How many questions are there?	……
3	How many sections of text are there?	……
4	Do the questions follow the order of the texts?	……
5	Is there at least one question on each text?	……
6	Are the questions identical to parts of the texts?	……
7	Is it quicker (A) to find the answer to each question in turn, or (B) to read one text and find all the questions that it answers?	……
8	Can a question have more than one right answer?	……
9	Is it useful to check each question against all four texts?	……
10	Is it worth guessing if you can't find the answer?	……

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**.

Cambridge English
BEC Vantage

Exercise 6

This is the complete Part 1 task that Exercises 1 and 2 above are based on.

- Look at the statements below and the information on the next page about feedback on staff performance.
- Which section (**A**, **B**, **C** or **D**) does each statement **1 – 7** refer to?
- For each statement **1 – 7**, choose one letter (**A**, **B**, **C** or **D**).
- You will need to use some of these letters more than once.

Example:

0 the reluctance of companies to relate pay to staff performance …*D*…

1 it not being essential to restrict feedback to once a year ……

2 the way in which feedback could identify people suitable for promotion ……

3 the aim of improving staff communication throughout an organisation ……

4 the feedback obtained on an employee being linked to requirements for a particular job ……

5 aspects of a group of employees' work that were identified as requiring improvement ……

6 feedback indicating both positive and negative aspects of an individual's work ……

7 the participation of less senior personnel in a member of staff's feedback ……

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**.

Cambridge English
BEC Vantage

Changes in Performance Feedback

A

In the past, feedback about your performance used to mean a quiet chat with the boss. But now 360-degree feedback – the system where employees are also given feedback by peers and by the people they manage – is taking root in corporate culture. The system is characterised by greater participation and has grown out of the desire of companies to create more open working environments where people work better together and ideas and opinions are exchanged between teams and across levels of seniority.

B

PCs linked to the company IT network are set to become the feedback machines. Many firms introducing 360-degree feedback are using Personal Development Planner software. Feedback on an individual, which is based on a questionnaire relating to attributes needed for that person's role in the company, is collected using this electronic system. All the information gathered is analysed and the end result is a suggested development plan. The advantage is that individuals make requests for the feedback themselves and receive the results directly.

C

Sarah Rains, from the pharmaceutical company Optec, said, 'Now feedback is available on our network, we encourage managers to choose how they use it. It is a flexible tool and we tell them that waiting for the annual event of a formal appraisal needn't apply.' At the engineering company NT, 250 technical managers have been through the feedback process. Jack Palmer, a senior manager there, said, 'We needed to develop the interpersonal skills of these technically-minded people. In particular, we wanted to build on their team-working and coaching skills.'

D

So, how is the new feedback culture likely to affect you? It could form the basis of your personal development programme, providing pointers to your strengths and also to those areas you need to develop more. Or feedback could be used for succession planning, where companies use the information to speculate on who has the right skills to move into more senior positions. As yet, few organisations have stretched the role of feedback so far as to link it to salaries. But one thing is clear: the future will bring even wider participation by all members.

.

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**.

Cambridge English

BEC Vantage

BEC Vantage Reading Part 1 – Sample Task

You should aim to spend about 10 minutes on this task.

- Look at the statements below and the comments given on the next page by mobile phone retailers.
- Which section (**A**, **B**, **C** or **D**) does each statement **1 – 7** refer to?
- For each statement **1 – 7**, choose one letter (**A**, **B**, **C** or **D**) on your Answer Sheet.
- You will need to use some of these letters more than once.

Example:

0 the extent to which mobile phones have changed in size …*B*…

1 the need for retail staff to stay informed about the mobile phones they are selling

2 the belief that the market will not sustain the present number of mobile phone retailers

3 the use of mobile phones no longer being restricted to a specific group of people

4 the relationship between charges and the number of mobile phone users

5 a negative view of competing mobile phone retailers

6 a comparison between change in the mobile phone industry and that in a different sector

7 those services available at mobile phone outlets that are not provided by other retailers

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**.

A

Market awareness of the mobile telephone has exploded and the retailer who specialises in mobile phones is seeing growth like never before. Admittedly, some customers buy their first mobile phone in the supermarket, but for advice, add-ons and particular services they turn to the specialist. There are a large number of mobile phone retailers and I can't help but feel the market only has room for four players. Undoubtedly, customer service is the factor that differentiates operators and I think this year we will probably see rationalisation in the sector.

B

When I first started in the industry, mobile phones were retailing at a thousand pounds and were as large as box files. Now, prices are constantly being driven down and handsets are considerably more compact. There is intense competition between the network providers, and every time they lower their tariffs, more people come into the market. This will continue, and while retail dealers' profits will be affected dramatically, network providers will have to generate more revenue by offering internet provision and data services to the mobile user.

C

Over a few years, prices have dropped sharply and technological advances have meant products have changed – and are changing. Successful retailers must try to keep on top of these developments and invest in the training of employees so they are able to offer impartial advice to customers. E-commerce is taking off but this won't necessarily replace traditional retail outlets. In order to stand out, you need innovative ideas on customer service. We don't believe in criticising other retailers, but there's nothing particularly exciting out there at present.

D

The mobile phone business is behaving like the internet industry in take-up and the pace of innovation, and it's important not to be left behind. We must continue to innovate in delivering the product to the customer. In terms of service provision, you can draw comparisons between us and our closest rival, but clearly all the main mobile phone retailers have succeeded in taking the industry forward. Growth has accelerated rapidly and the mobile telephone has changed from simply being a business tool, to being a means of communication for everyone.

© UCLES 2009. This material may be photocopied (without alteration) and distributed for classroom use provided no charge is made. For further information see our **Terms and Conditions**.